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INFO RUEHLB/AMEMBASSY BEIRUT PRIORITY 7748

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/04/2018
TAGS: [LE](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [QA](#)
SUBJECT: QATAR LEAVING UNIFIL

REF: IIR 6 857 0075 08

Classified By: NEA Acting A/S Robert M. Danin
for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[11](#). (U) This is an action request. Please see paragraphs three and four.

Summary -----

[12](#). (C) Qatar, the only Arab troop contributor to the UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), plans to withdraw its 203 troops on/around February 10. Qatar's participation in UNIFIL sends an important political message of Arab backing for the peacekeeping mission and gives Qatar a stake in the outcome of Lebanon's political crisis. We would like Qatar to maintain its contribution -- at least until August 2008 as requested by the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) -- or be replaced by another Arab troop contributor.

Objectives -----

[13](#). (SBU) Department requests Embassy Doha pursue the following objectives:

-- Seek Qatar's agreement to maintain its troop contribution to UNIFIL, at least through August 2008 as requested by DPKO. Request Qatar direct their response to DPKO's Office of Force Generation Services (FGS) via their permanent mission to the UN.

-- If Qatar is unable to maintain its troop contribution, request its intercession with other Gulf Cooperation Council or Arab League member states to request they consider replacing Qatar as Arab troop contributors.

[14](#). (SBU) Department requests all other action addressees pursue the following objective:

-- Seek host nation agreement to contribute troops to UNIFIL. Request interested host nations contact DPKO FGS via their permanent missions to the UN.

Reporting Deadline -----

[15](#). (U) Posts should report responses to this demarche to NEA/ELA Matthew Irwin and IO/PSC Larry Mrozinski by February [12](#).

Additional Background -----

[16](#). (C) Qatar's contribution of 203 troops to UNIFIL in the aftermath of the 2006 Israel-Hizballah war sent an important

message of Arab support for a peacekeeping mission otherwise dominated by Western troops. As Qatar enjoys closer ties to Iran than many of its neighbors in the Gulf, its contribution also signaled support for the eviction of Iranian-supported Hizballah militants from southern Lebanon.

17. (C) In recent months, Qatar has played an increasingly problematic role vis-a-vis Lebanon's presidential election, allegedly working with Syria to sway Arab League mediation efforts in favor of Lebanon's pro-Syrian opposition, including Hizballah. The Department and much of the international community are concerned that an opposition victory leading to greater influence over Lebanon's presidency and cabinet would impede progress towards the disarmament of militias in Lebanon, including Hizballah, and increase the likelihood that another internal or regional conflict would engulf Lebanon and UNIFIL.

18. (C) According to DPKO FGS, Qatar cited "internal reasons" in its decision to withdraw from UNIFIL. On December 27, 2007, DPKO sent a letter to Qatar's permanent mission to the UN requesting Qatar postpone its withdrawal from UNIFIL until at least August 2008. DPKO FGS has to date been unsuccessful in securing another Arab troop contributor to replace Qatar. As Lebanon's democratically-elected government continues to withstand political and physical attacks from militant groups and the Syrian-backed Lebanese opposition, it is vital to maintain real and perceived Arab solidarity in support of Lebanon, including support for UNIFIL.
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